



JAMES E. RISCH

United States Senator for Idaho

NEWS RELEASE

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RISCH ADDS BIOMASS, GEOTHERMAL TO SUSTAINABILITY ENERGY TRAINING PROGRAMS

Washington, DC – During a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee work session today Idaho Senator Jim Risch successfully inserted language that adds geothermal and biomass to the list of alternative energy workforce training to be provided by community colleges. The language was added to Senator Ron Wyden’s amendment to establish a community college-based training and education program for sustainable and alternative energy technologies.

“Idaho needs to further develop our bountiful geothermal and biomass resources to meet future energy needs. We need trained technicians as these resources are developed and our community colleges are an excellent place to provide this training. Students will be able to study in a field where job opportunities are growing, and these developing industries will find a well-trained source of employees,” said Risch. “I was very pleased that the committee accepted this addition, which will greatly benefit Idaho as well as many other states.”

Idaho ranks third in the western United States for new geothermal power capacity. Estimates of known geothermal areas in Idaho could result in 860 megawatts of power when developed, according to a Western Governors Task Force study.

The potential for biomass as a renewable resource for energy is also large in Idaho. With forests in the north and crops in the south, cogeneration plants that utilize the residue of harvested timber and crops can be a major source of sustainable energy.

During the markup session Senator Risch also supported language offered by Senator Lisa Murkowski that adds nuclear to the workforce training program. That language is still under consideration by the committee.

The amendment mark-up is the first in a series of meetings to create a comprehensive energy bill. Today’s amendment addresses the shortage of technical workers in the sustainable and alternative energy fields. It would establish a Sustainable Energy Training Program for Community Colleges through the U.S. Department of Energy in coordination with the Department of Labor.

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